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ASTONISHING IRON MAN

JOSS WHEDON • JOHN CASSADAY

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SORRY WE'RE LATE.

PETE AND KITTY?

THEY HAVEN'T SHOWN YET. BUT THEY'RE ALIVE: NEWS IS REPORTING A LOT OF SIGHTINGS.

WHAT *HAPPENED* TO YOU LOT?

WELL. THIS DOESN'T LEAVE A WHOLE LOTTA ROOM FOR DOUBT, DOES IT?

HOWZIT WORK? IS THAT THE SUN?

BEST GUESS.

SO, WHAT? SUPERNOVA, ORBITAL SHIFT?

AGENT BRAND'S BRILLIANT PLAN WENT SOUTH. OUR PRETEND BURNING WRECKAGE STOPPED PRETENDING.

WE GET THROUGH THIS, I'M GONNA POP A CLAW THROUGH HER EYE, YOU GUYS COOL WITH THAT?

ABSOLUTELY.

LOGAN, WE DON'T JUST... NAH, GO FOR IT.

VERY LIKELY, MS. ICHIKI. HIGH MARKS FOR THE STOWAWAY STUDENT.

I'M NOT... I HAVE A NEW, UH...

SHE'S CALLED "*ARMOR*". SHE'S OUR NEW TEAMMATE.

I MEAN, THAT IS...LOGAN SAID.

OH, IT'S LOVELY. GOD KNOWS THE TEAM'S GOING TO NEED SOME NEW BLOOD SOON.

DID HE TEACH YOU THE HANDSHAKE?

WITHOUT A LAB, I CAN'T REALLY TELL MUCH ABOUT THIS CARVING.

THE SYMBOLS ARE OLDER THAN ANYTHING IN OUR BANKS. GONNA BE A WHILE BEFORE WE GET SPECIFICS.

I THINK WE OUGHTA SPLIT UP.

AT LAST WE AGREE ON SOMETHING.

YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.

AND SO ENDS THAT ERA.

I NEED TO GET A LOOK AT THE WEAPON THEY'VE GOT POINTED AT THE EARTH. THERE'S A BASE DIRECTLY UNDER ITS ORBIT A HUNDRED MILES EAST. YOU'RE SCIENCE DIVISION, SO YOU COME WITH.

I WANNA FIND PETE AND KITTY. I'LL TAKE THE KID.

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO CALL ME--

I'M INTERESTED IN THIS KRUUN.

YOU'RE NOT UP TO FACING HIM.

I'VE GOT MEN IN THE FIELD, I THINK YOU AND MS. FROST SHOULD RENDEZVOUS WITH THEM AND WAIT FOR WORD.

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK.

NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU'RE POWERLESS AND SHE'S MORE THAN NORMALLY UNSTABLE. I WASN'T COUNTING ON EITHER OF THOSE THINGS WHEN I BROUGHT YOU HERE.

WANT ME TO POP THAT CLAW?

NO.

LADY HAS A POINT.

LET'S DO THE WORK.

SO I WAS WRONG.

NOT ONLY ARE YOU CLEARLY DESTINED TO WIPE OUT THIS RACE..

YOU APPARENTLY HAVE TO DO IT...

...ONE AT A TIME.

ARE WE DONE HERE?

KILL IT!!!

WE'RE DONE.

CHILD DID NOT EVEN KNOW WHO I WAS. IT JUST WANTED BLOOD.

THE MORE I SEE OF THIS WORLD--

RASPUTIN!

OY...

RASPUTIN AND PRYDE. YOU WILL COME WITH US.

IT'S UNLIKELY.

YOUR TRANSLATORS ARE PRIMITIVE.

IT IS NOT AN ORDER.

WE ARE ASKING.

WE ARE ASKING FOR YOUR TRUST.

I AM UNIMPRESSED.

WE ALREADY HAVE INTELLIGENCE ON THE X-MEN.

NOT LIKE MINE.

I WAS CREATED TO KILL THEM.

AND YET THEY LIVE.

I WAS DISTRACTED, BY A MORE IMPORTANT MISSION.

AND I WAS YOUNGER THEN.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR WORLD ANY MORE THAN YOU CARE ABOUT ME. BUT OUR INTERESTS COINCIDE.

THE X-MEN CAN BE STOPPED.

POWERLORD, WE HAVE WORD FROM THE ATTUR-HEI.

COLOSSUS?

HIS CONFEDERATES, AND AGENT BRAND--THEY OVERCAME THE GUARDS, BUT ONE WOKE TO SEE THEM GO THEIR SEVERAL WAYS.

IF THIS MACHINE IS RIGHT, THEY KNOW ABOUT THE RETALIATOR. IT MUST BE PROTECTED.

BRING DOWN A SNOWSTRIKE BETWEEN ATTUR-HEI AND THE SUB-MOON BASE.

AND THOSE HEADED ELSEWHERE...?

WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

WELL, YOU CERTAINLY ROLLED RIGHT OVER, DIDN'T YOU?

IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE SUCH A SUBMISSIVE I'D'VE GONE WITH AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WARDROBE.

I'M TRYING TO DRIVE.

BRAND IS RECKLESS AT BEST.

IT'S STILL HER SHOW. WHEN IT'S NOT HER SHOW I'LL MAKE IT KNOWN.

WILL YOU NOW.

OUR FIRST TALK SINCE THE MANSION AND YOUR OPENING GAMBIT IS SNARK? THAT'S A LITTLE WEAK, EMMA.

AND WE'RE NOT ALONE.

DO YOU EXPECT ME TO BEG FORGIVENESS? BANK LEFT ON MY MARK.

--ACTING AS THOUGH YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH!

YOU REALLY DON'T GET IT, DO YOU? I STOOD BY YOU! I STILL DO! I GOT NO COVER HERE; I'M GONNA USE THE FIRES.

THROTTLE DOWN A BIT; WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM COMPLETELY. AND STOP PRETENDING EVERYTHING'S THE WAY IT WAS.

IT'S NOT! THAT'S THE POINT!

I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU NOW.

OF COURSE IT'S ABSURD, BUT...

...I IMAGINED YOU AN ACTUAL GIANT.

YOU SAW THE CARE CENTER?

IT'S APPALLING.

IT'S *MEDIEVAL*. THE TECHNOLOGY THIS PLANET HAS... ARE ALL THE HOSPITALS THIS PRIMITIVE?

"HOSPITAL." YOU HAVE A WORD FOR IT.

THERE *ARE* NO OTHERS.

TO CARE FOR THE WOUNDED, TO HONOR THE DEAD OR FIGHT FOR THE WEAK...

ON THE BREAKWORLD, THESE ARE THE CLOSEST WE HAVE TO SINS.

BUT I DON'T THINK COMPASSION IS A SIN.

I THINK IT MAY BE A MUTATION.

WHY EXACTLY DID YOU RESCUE US?

OH, I HAVEN T RESCUED YOU; THIS IS POSSIBLY THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE ON THE PLANET.

IF POWERLORD KRUUN KNEW A THING ABOUT IT, THIS MOUNTAIN WOULD BE A CRATER.

I SOUGHT YOU OUT BECAUSE I BELIEVE YOU MAY BE THE INSTRUMENT OF OUR SALVATION.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE THE PROPHECY?

I DIDN'T. AND THEN YOU WERE HERE

AND I THOUGHT PERHAPS IT'S NOT THE PROPHECY THAT'S WRONG, BUT THE INTERPRETATION.

A WORLD IN CHAOS, PERHAPS, BUT NOT DESTROYED RE-FORMED.

REBORN.

I AM NOT A MESSIAH.

BY THE WORLD, NO; YOU'RE A MAN.

BUT YOU'VE BEEN THRUST INTO THE ARENA, WILLING OR NO. THE WORLD IS WATCHING.

I'VE BEEN IN THE ARENA. A SHOW-KILLER; THAT'S WHAT I WAS BRED AS.

THE THRONG SCREAMS AND YOUR HEAD CROWDS WITH ONLY TWO CHOICES: KILL, BE KILLED. I WON SO OFTEN THE ROAR BECAME LIKE THE AIR TO ME. I COULDN'T EVEN HEAR IT.

AND IN THE SILENCE, THE THIRD CHOICE CAN BE HEARD.

I HAVE NO AGENDA FOR YOU. NO PLAN, NO COUP.

I BROUGHT YOU HERE SO YOU COULD HAVE A MOMENT TO HEAR THAT GREAT SILENCE, UNDERSTAND THAT THIRD CHOICE. TO KNOW THAT EVEN ON A WARRIOR WORLD, WE CAN BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND IT TOO.

WE CAN BE BETTER.

REST TONIGHT.

AND TOMORROW YOU DO WHAT YOU WILL.

--HELL DID THIS COME FROM?

SNOWSTRIKE! KRUUN MUST KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING!

WE NEED COVER *NOW.*

"SNOWSTRIKE?"

MY ENGINE'S FREEZING!

WE'LL NEVER FIND COVER!

IN THIRTY SECONDS IT'S GONNA BE A HUNDRED BELOW IN THE SHADE, SO...

...DIG.

I TRULY DISLIKE THIS WORLD.

TACTICAL WEATHER DEPLOYMENT IS PRETTY COMMON, PROFESSOR. DIG FASTER.

AND HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE CAUGHT IN THIS BESIDES US?

KRUUN WILL DO WHATEVER HE HAS TO.

REMINDS ME OF SOMEONE.

WHY CAN'T YOU LET UP FOR ONE SECOND?

YOU'RE AMORAL, YOU'RE ABRASIVE, AND RIGHT NOW YOU'RE LOOKING AT ME LIKE I'M A TAUN-TAUN.

YOU CAN STOP WHINING. I DON'T NEED YOUR GUTS TO KEEP ME WARM.

OH.

MY.

SAID HE WOULD TALK, BUT ONLY TO YOU. HE'S RESILIENT, THIS ONE.

THE MIND-PROBES AREN'T WORKING?

ALL OF BRAND'S CREW IS SHIELDED. SHE MUST HAVE OUR CODES.

A LACKEY... THIS IS BENEATH ME.

FETCH MY PERSONAL TOOLS, IN CASE HE BECOMES COY.

YOU ARE IN A SORRY STATE, AREN'T YOU? NONE OF THE DAMAGE IS PERMANENT, IF YOU'RE WORRIED.

BUT THAT CAN CHANGE.

LISTEN CAREFULLY. THE RECORDERS WILL REBOOT IN A MINUTE.

WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE WEAPON.

IT'S PRIMED. KRUUN HAS ONLY TO PUSH THE BUTTON, AND YOUR PRESENCE HAS PUSHED HIM THAT MUCH CLOSER.

YOU HAVE TO STALL HIM. ANY WAY YOU CAN.

EVEN ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE HIS ACTIONS IS TREASON.

POWER'S NOT FOR THE WEAK, ISN'T THAT YOUR THING? KEEP OUR DEAL AND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR THRONE.

AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE MEANS TO KEEP IT.

"WE'LL GIVE YOU COLOSSUS."

THEY LEFT FOOD.

IT IS PROBABLY SAFE TO EAT...

...IF YOU ARE HUNGRY...

I'M NOT.

NO.

BEST TO SLEEP, I GUESS. NOW I AM MESSIAH, TOMORROW WILL PROBABLY BE BUSY.

THEY BRING ME BACK FROM DEAD. THEY WANT ME DEAD. I WILL DESTROY THEM. I WILL SAVE THEM.

I'M SO CONFUSED...

...SO TIRED.

NOW I AM *MORE* CONFUSED.

...BUT SOMEHOW NOT AS TIRED.

IF THAT'S THE LAST OF THE SPLINTER SHIP, THE TROOPS CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR.

WE'LL CIRCLE.

AND AT SOME POINT YOU CAN THINK ABOUT SPEAKING, AGAIN, EVER, BEFORE WE DIE OF OLD AGE.

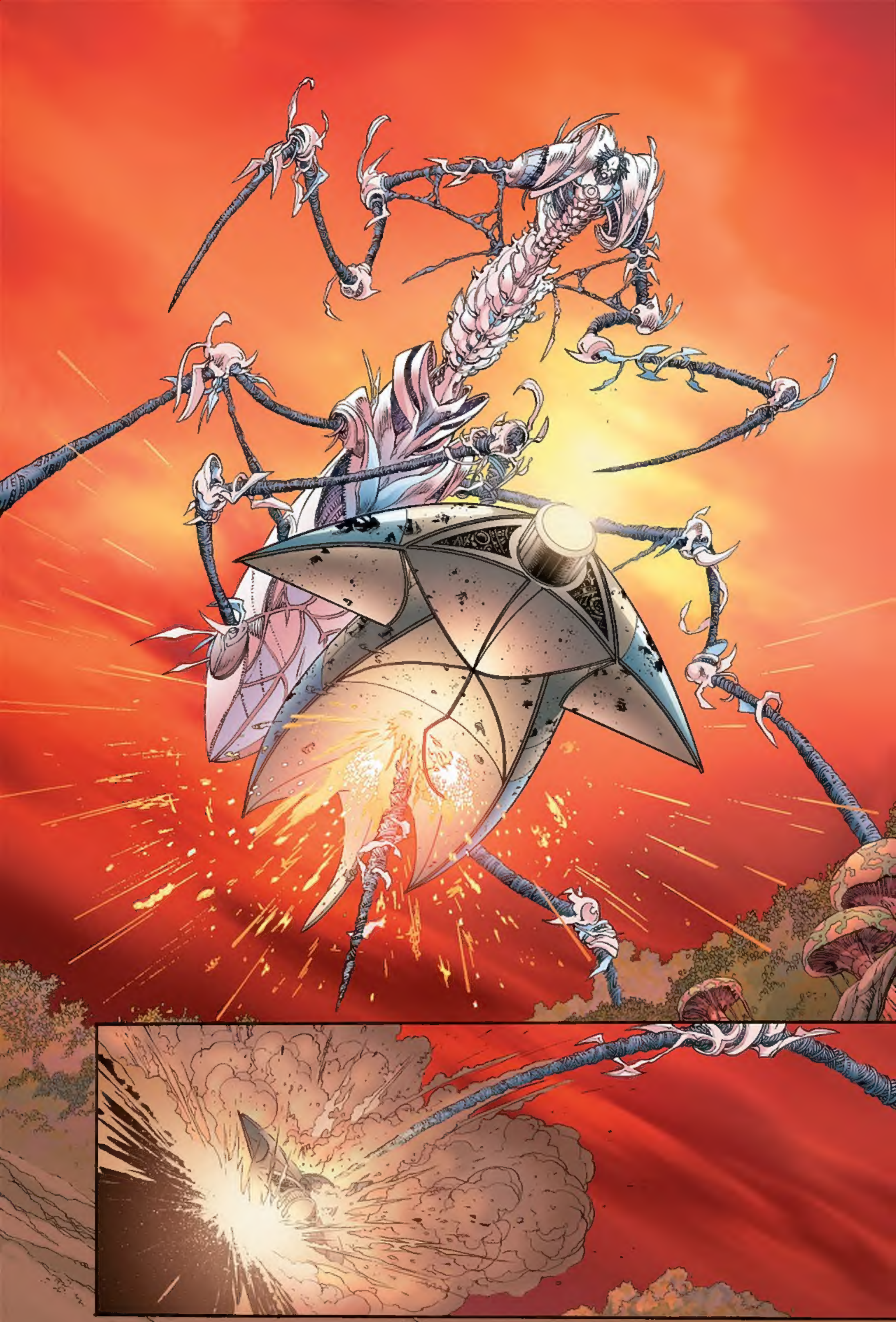
I'M SORRY..

WHOAH WHOAH, HEY, DID I ACTUALLY JUST HEAR THAT? THAT'S UNCHARTED TERRITORY, WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO DO SOME RECON.

SORRY FOR BEING SO MEAN? SORRY YOU EVER MET ME? SORRY THAT YOU BASICALLY--

OH.

HOLD ON!



HHNNNNN....

SCOTT...

HE SAID HE LOVED ME.

THIS MAN, THIS EXTRAORDINARY, ORDINARY MAN IS IN LOVE.

WITH ME.

THAT'S ALL OVER NOW.

OH, IT'S OVER ALL RIGHT.

DO ME ONE FAVOR, DEAR...

KILL ME.

PLEASE DO TRY TO MAKE IT QUICK.

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EMPIRE